

Getting from “here” to “there”

Have you ever noticed how the Jesus of the resurrection narratives comes and goes? The disciples are gathered into a locked upper room – within the only everyday space and time they have known – and Jesus eases in to address them and then eases out again. Out into the everyday space outside that room? No, into a space more spacious than we know – so that he can ease into another location, for instance appear to those two disciples on the road to Emmaus – without any need for transportation. And it seems he is not impeded by time – like having to clock his way from place to place as we do. He just shows up – at different moments in different places: in Jerusalem, Emmaus, by the Sea of Galilee – showing up, not lingering. He doesn't appear as a ghost; he allows Thomas to touch his body, he eats with them. Yet he seems to come out of a wider dimension of space and time – more real, more enduring.

Or have you ever noticed how nobody recognizes him at first? Two disciples, grieving over the death of Jesus, are walking along and this fellow shows up, asking them what they were discussing. And they think, in effect, where has this fellow been of late: *Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know of the things that have taken place there?* Jesus continues the charade, saying: *What sort of things?*

Then there is Mary Magdalene to whom the risen Jesus says, *Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?* Thinking him a gardener, she says, *Sir, if you carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him.* Then there is Thomas, who when he finds out the other apostles have seen the risen Jesus, says in effect: *That's impossible, he's dead.* And then there is the seaside scene where Peter and John and others are fishing – and someone calls out from the shore, *Children, have you caught anything to eat?* And they say simply, *No.* And even after the stranger tells them where to cast their net, it's only while they are hauling in a huge catch that somebody says, *Hey – that's the Lord! Alive!*

So what can we make of all this? Were these episodes written simply to show how Jesus miraculously rose from the dead, which proves beyond a doubt that he was divine? Or is there a more challenging meaning lingering (like Jesus) between the lines? Could it not also be that the narratives are displaying how, once the historical Jesus was no longer present within the space and time we are used to, he can show up at any moment of our lives – not even recognized? As when your mind does a sudden flip and from that moment on you see things differently, clearly, unveiled? Or when your spouse becomes demented and you enter a more demanding sense of space and time?

The resurrection experience of the early Church certainly widened the stretch of time and space known previously to people like Simon who became Peter and Saul who became Paul. And so resurrection experiences, intruding upon the limited sense of time and space we occupy, can still happen – here, there and everywhere all the time - until a spacious and ever present Christ finally appears as YOU – as St. Paul expressed it: *I live, now not I, but Christ lives within ME* - and in a broader sense: *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for [we] are all one in Christ Jesus.* We have entered into a new caring sense of space and time!

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